

**ANG****Bayan**

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Editorial

Take advantage of the deepening political crisis

The Arroyo regime is creating the conditions for the exacerbation of a political crisis that is bound to lead to a head-on collision between itself and the Filipino people.

It did everything it could to ensure the victory of its candidates in the recent election to pave the way for its desperate bid to cling to power past 2010. It per-

petrated massive fraud, used the dirtiest of tactics, harassed its political opponents and sowed widespread violence.

By garnering a huge majority in Congress and in the local governments, the regime is assured that it could block a new impeachment bid. It could railroad the approval of its long-desired constitutional changes to facilitate further repressive

measures and prolong its hold on power. It

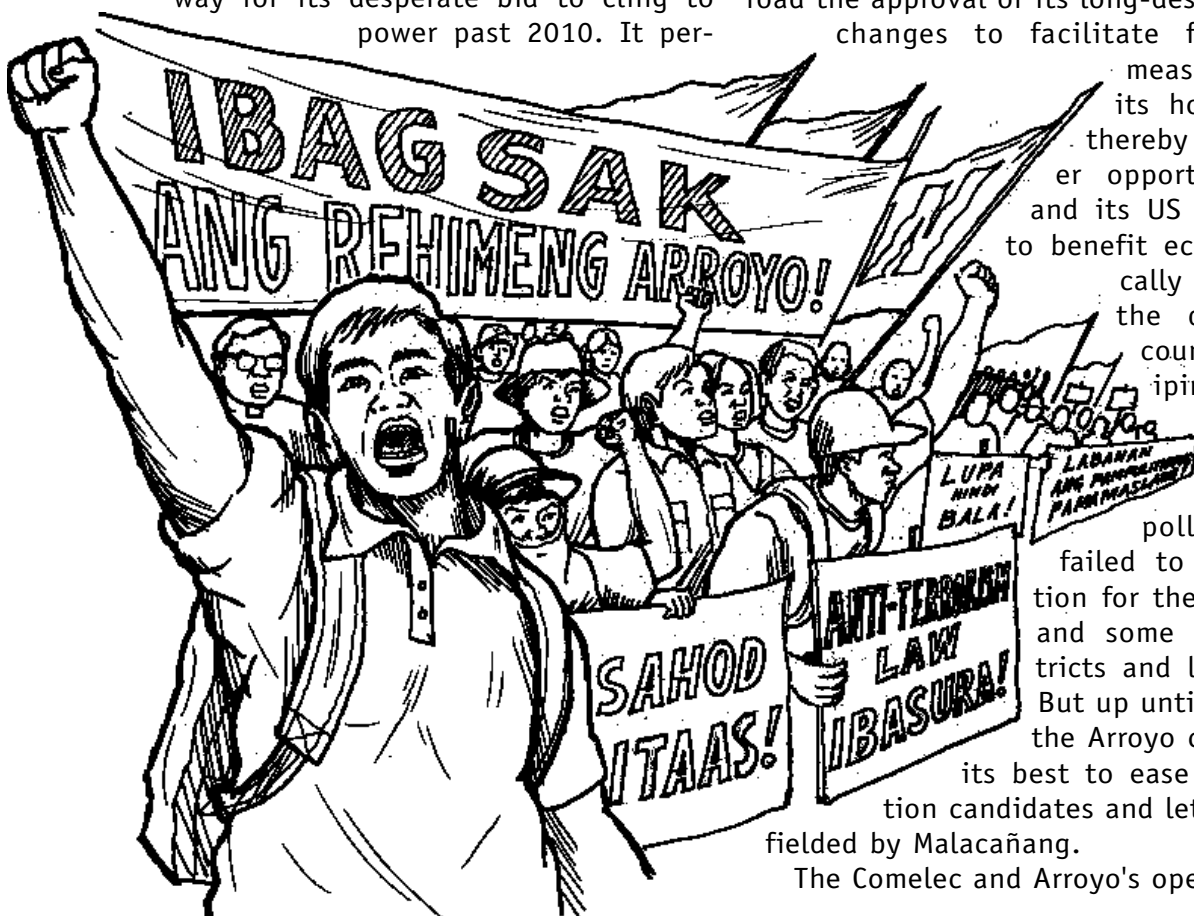
thereby anticipates greater opportunities for itself and its US imperialist master to benefit economically, politically and militarily to the detriment of the country and the Filipino people.

Despite its all-out effort to cheat in the polls, however, it

failed to control the election for the Senate, party-list and some congressional districts and local governments. But up until the last moment, the Arroyo camp is still trying

its best to ease out more opposition candidates and let in the candidates fielded by Malacañang.

The Comelec and Arroyo's operators are likewise



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resorting to various kinds of fraud to further reduce the number of seats that could be won by progressive party-list organizations.

The relentless exposés of serious cases of electoral fraud and violence mostly committed by the Arroyo camp has been fanning the flames of the people's anger. But these are but the latest entries in the long list of abuses and violations of the people's rights and interests.

Arroyo's sham victory in 2004, underscored by the "Hello Garci" scandal, still rankles in the people's collective memory. The people bore witness to Arroyo's abuse of the power that did not even rightfully belong to her. No longer will they tolerate any attempt by the fraudulent president to invoke her minions' sham electoral victory to suppress the regime's opponents and pave the way for its continued stay in power.

The people's abject poverty likewise belies the Arroyo regime's claims of economic progress. It is they who bear the brunt of the huge funds allotted

by the regime for debt service and the heavy taxes exacted by government. Yet they get nothing in return but measly and substandard basic social services. Meanwhile, imperialists and their local big comprador and bureaucrat



lackeys greedily plunder the country's resources. Local industry and agriculture are in shambles because of the exploitative, oppressive and pro-imperialist economic policies pushed by the Arroyo regime.

The people are even more incensed by the regime's continuing resort to killings, abductions,

widespread terrorism and other means of repression against activists and citizens who strongly oppose the current corrupt and brutal rule.

The regime is well aware that it is the revolutionary and progressive forces along with the most conscientious oppositionists form the largest, who comprise the most solid and strongest obstacles to its efforts to extend its rule beyond Arroyo's term of office. It has thus laid out plans to intensify repression and psywar from 2007 until 2010 against its main enemies, using the Anti-Terrorism Law that takes effect in July as its foremost instrument of violence and repression.

The people must transform their overwhelming anger against Gloria Arroyo into a broad and powerful protest movement that will culminate in a direct and decisive confrontation with the regime. There must be stepped-up efforts to rouse, organize and mobilize people in the cities and countryside to build a strong enough force with the decisiveness to challenge and fight the regime. The broadest possible anti-Arroyo united front must be built to advance a massive protest movement that will oust the much despised ruling clique.

We must redouble our efforts to expand and strengthen the Party, New People's Army, revolutionary mass organizations and revolutionary bases. It is important to launch vigorous revolutionary mass actions.

We must continue to intensify NPA tactical offensives to punish the armed fascist units on which the regime mainly relies for support, thus effectively weakening the regime and contributing to its more rapid downfall. **AB**



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Rampant fraud in Mindanao

Cheating by the Arroyo regime in the last elections is becoming all the more brazen and rampant as the canvassing of votes draws to an end. The regime is going all-out in using the Comelec, the military and other state machineries in connivance with warlords in large areas of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to cheat and manipulate the election results.

As with the 2004 election, these areas are key to extracting more votes. It is here that the regime is doing all it can to ensure victory for at least one other Team Unity senatorial candidate and sabotage the progressive parties in the party-list election.

Rampant cheating has been going on for decades in Lanao, the Zamboanga Peninsula, Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-tawi. In 2004, these areas were pushed to the limelight after local Comelec officials were implicated in a scandal involving Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcilano, Arroyo's chief operator for fraud in Mindanao who gained nationwide notoriety as "Garcia."

Hundreds of thousands of voters were disfranchised in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur during the recent election. It was election inspectors and soldiers who filled in the ballots. In many areas of Zamboanga, the handwriting on the ballots belonged to only one or a few individuals. In other areas, no elections took place, with the Board of Canvassers manufacturing the election returns instead.

No voting took place in all of Lanao del Sur's 13 towns due to violence and irregularities. Bombs were intentionally set off in several parts of the province to delay the election so that the votes could later be auctioned to the highest bidder from among the operators of senatorial candidates and party-list groups desperate for victory.

Special elections were held in

Lanao del Sur on May 23 and 27.

There was an improbable increase in the number of voters in the province from 275,572 in 2004 to 396,913 at present. It is even more mind-boggling that in two of the province's municipalities, there was a 100% increase in the number of voters and a 60%-80% rise in three other towns.

Cheating was even more rampant in Marawi City where votes for the whole of Lanao del Sur were counted. Local politicians in connivance with high-ranking Comelec officials acted as operators for syndicates involved in poll fraud, buying and selling votes and manipulating the counting.

Teacher Darwiza Lim Alfad exposed how the Comelec cheated in her Sulu hometown. Alfad said that even if no elections were held in the area, the Comelec announced a 12-0 victory for Team Unity. She and several others were ordered by municipal election officer Pakulin Sulaiman to fill in the ER in a house. Afterwards, Alfad was told to sign the ER and deliver it to the municipal hall.

Votes for the Genuine Opposition were intentionally not counted during the canvassing. More-

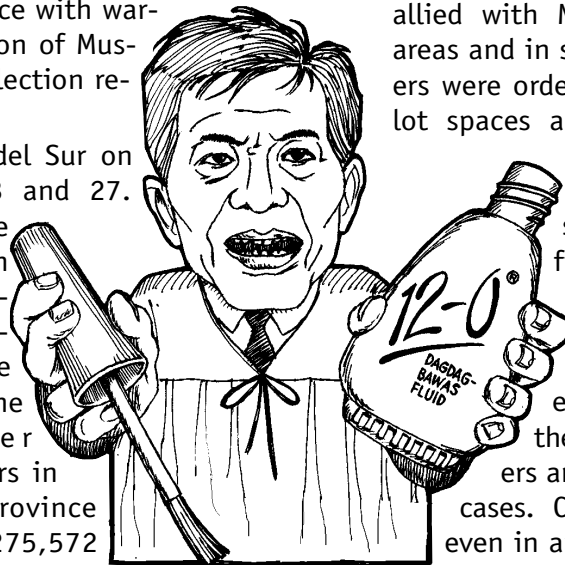
over, votes for some party-list groups were shifted to party-list groups favored by local politicians allied with Malacañang. In many areas and in several instances, voters were ordered not to fill in ballot spaces allotted for senatorial candidates and party-list groups. The blank spaces were later filled in during the canvassing at the municipal level.

Soldiers and Comelec officials prevented the entry of poll watchers and observers in several cases. Cheating was rampant even in areas where media, poll watchdogs and poll watchers

were present. Many precincts had no voters' lists, thus allowing anyone, including children, to vote. Voters were not marked with indelible ink, giving them the opportunity to vote several times. Witnesses saw poll watchers for Arroyo's senatorial candidates dictating to voters inside the polling precincts. Many residents were fearful they would be harassed by soldiers or the armed goons of powerful politicians.

Despite the numerous complaints against them, Comelec officials in Mindanao implicated in the "Hello, Garcia" scandal were not removed and were even promoted.

Four teachers who served as Election Inspectors in Maguindanao testified on the rampant cheating in their areas. They and 50 other Election Inspectors were herded by armed men into a banana plantation last May 14. There, the armed men filled in the ballots, copying from a list containing the names of the 12 Team Unity senatorial candidates and Arroyo's local candidates. They added that all Team Unity candidates received the



same number of votes while the opposition did not get even a single vote.

In Lanao del Sur, Comelec officials Jubil Surmieda and Renault Macarambon were caught on video by an ABS-CBN news crew while they were in the act of sneaking into a Marawi City hotel blank ERs that they were to fill in later. Initially, Surmieda and Macarambon, along with Comelec Commissioner Rene Sarmiento, denied sneaking blank ERs into the hotel. They reluctantly changed their stories after ABS-CBN correspondents Ricky Carandang and Noel Alamar showed them the video.

The Comelec has denied the opposition's petition to declare a failure of election in North and South Cotabato and merely ordered a new canvass of votes in the area.

There was a huge discrepancy between the original and the new canvass, a sure indicator that Comelec officials in North and South Cotabato cheated. The new canvass showed that votes for Team Unity candidates were padded by 119,000 while votes for the Genuine opposition were shaved. Arroyo's operators cunningly padded Loren Legarda's votes by 38,000 to give the impression that the opposition likewise cheated.

The Comelec declared a failure of election in Maguindanao and is slated to hold a special election in the province. GO candidate Koko Pimentel is vehemently protesting this move, saying it would be illegal to hold a special election for senatorial candidates only. The special election will only worsen cheating and bribery because Malacañang will do its utmost to ensure victory for its candidate Miguel Zubiri. The Comelec should instead proclaim all winning senatorial candidates. Pimentel is currently the 12th winning senatorial candidate. AB

Malacañang sabotaging party-list system

Malacañang launched a systematic and dirty campaign of violence, harassment and cheating in the recent election to put the heat on progressive party-list organizations and prevent them from gaining more seats in Congress. It is doing everything to prevent the progressives from effectively representing the people's interests and exposing the rottenness of the ruling regime.

Malacañang was able to drastically reduce the votes for progressive parties compared to the previous election and ensure the victory of the new and obscure party-list groups it has fielded.

In the latest tally of votes, Bayan Muna, which was expected to be the party-list frontrunner dropped to second spot. BUHAY of Mike Velarde's religious group El Shaddai took first spot, a development that astounded many observers.

At least five party-list groups whose nominees are known Arroyo allies are poised to send their representatives to Congress. These

groups include A TEACHER, ABONO, AGAP, Batas and ARC.

Meanwhile, progressive party-list groups Bayan Muna, Gabriela and Anakpawis are in danger of losing a number of their seats in Congress, mostly due to the sudden increase of party-list groups and their votes. Not all of Malacañang's party-list fronts won seats in Congress, but their fielding has increased the number of party-list votes, making it more difficult for progressive party-list groups to obtain 2% of the total votes cast in the party-list election.

Violence and cheating against

Cheating in Cagayan

As in other areas, the military was extensively used to sow terror in various towns of Cagayan during the recent election.

The AFP campaigned against Anakpawis and Bayan Muna in the villages of Dungeg, Sta. Teresita and Iska, Gonzaga, and threatened residents during public meetings in the towns of Tuao, Allacapan, Pi-at and Tuguegarao. Aside from progressive parties, their psywar and slander campaign also targeted opposition candidates.

The 17th IB launched military operations in the villages of Carupian, Bunugan and Bagunot, Baggao on election eve. They assumed Bayan Muna and other progressive parties have a strong following in the area because the residents benefited from agricultural infrastructure built through the project funds of progressive lawmakers. Military elements stationed themselves in election precincts in the towns of Sta. Teresita and Allacapan. On election day, PNP and AFP troops prevented residents of Rebecca, Gonzaga and Villa and Dungeg, Sta. Teresita from voting and launched a slander campaign against progressive parties.

During the counting, many precincts omitted from the tally board the votes for progressive parties and opposition senatorial candidates. The Comelec also banned poll watchers of progressive parties from observing the municipal canvasses. AB

Bayan Muna et. al. The Arroyo regime used the AFP and the PNP as its primary instruments in terrorizing the people especially in areas where these parties enjoy widespread support.

In Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula), military troops and policemen went from house to house and harassed leaders of progressive parties to prevent them from voting and campaigning. Poll watchers of progressive parties were banned from precincts and canvass areas to prevent them from acting against the various forms of fraud.

In Mindanao, votes for Malacañang's party-list fronts were padded by more than two million. In many cases, the votes for these parties exceeded the number of registered voters. In the town of Muhammad Adjul, Basilan, which has a total 9,115 registered voters, Malacañang party-list fronts ALIF, YACAP, Aangat Tayo, Ahon Bayan and Sulong Barangay got 26,000 votes. In many other cases, thousands of votes were shaved from progressive party-list groups and added to the votes of the regime's party-list fronts.

In ARMM, Comelec official Rey Sumalipao ensured the addition of several tens of thousands of votes for ALIF, Biyaheng Pinoy and YACAP. Sumalipao, who was also involved in Arroyo's massive cheating in 2004, is a known henchman of former Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

In Zamboanga del Sur and the Lanao provinces, votes for ALIF were padded by the tens of thousands. In many towns, other party-list groups did not get any votes. In Zamboanga Sibugay, votes for COOP-NATCO and UNI-MAD were padded by more than 36,000.

In Caloocan City, an ER showed Kasangga, party of Mike Arroyo's sister, getting several hundreds of votes even as reports at the

precinct level showed it received no more than five votes.

Veterans formula. To further reduce the number of progressive party-list representatives, the Comelec announced last June 4 that it will be implementing a new system of determining how many party-list representatives should be allowed seats in Congress.

Since 1998, a party-list group was entitled to one congressional seat for every 2% of votes cast in its favor in the party-list election, with each party entitled to a maximum of three seats.

In lieu of this, the Comelec announced that it would be using the "Veteran's formula" decided upon by the Supreme Court in 2001. The formula, which was strongly rejected by various sectors, was never implemented by the Comelec in previous elections. Based on the new formula, only the leading party-list group will get three congressional seats and every party that gained 2% or more of the votes would be entitled to only one or two seats.

Despite the various means used to harass and cheat the progressive party-list groups, Bayan Muna gained well above 6% of the votes while Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) got more than 4% and Anakpawis, more than 2%. These three progressive parties are the primary targets of Arroyo and her leading officials in Malacañang and the armed forces.

Based on the old formula, Bayan Muna should be getting a maximum of three congressional seats; GWP will get two congressional seats; and Anakpawis, one congressional seat. Should the Comelec push through with its plan, Bayan Muna will be getting only two congressional seats. Gabriela will get one, while Anakpawis' representatives might not even be able to sit in Congress.

Supreme Court orders Ka Bel's release



Anakpawis Party Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran was granted temporary liberty last June 4 after the Supreme Court dismissed last May 31 rebellion charges against him and five others known collectively as the "Batasan 6". Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Elmo Alameda allowed Beltran to attend the last three sessions of the 13th Congress that will end on June 7.

The Supreme Court also reprimanded the Department of Justice and warned it not to use the law and its office to pursue narrow political agenda.

Ka Bel was warmly met by fellow congressmen and supporters at the Batasan Pambansa Complex when he arrived from the Philippine Heart Center (PHC) last June 4. He and most of his supporters were dressed in red barong Tagalog.

Upon arriving at the Congress, Ka Bel decried the baselessness of the rebellion charges filed against him and Rep. Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna; Rep. Rafael Mariano

of Anakpawis; and Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela Women's Party.

He also took the opportunity to speak on issues confronting the Filipino working class. Foremost among these is his proposal for a ₱125 daily wage increase for workers and a ₱3,000 across the board pay hike for government employees.

Ka Bel has meanwhile filed a petition before the Supreme Court for his immediate and unconditional release. He is also set to file charges against all those involved in his arrest and detention and is asking the court to award him a million pesos in damages for each month he was illegally detained.

Despite the Supreme Court decision, however, Secretary of Justice Raul Gonzalez, Solicitor-General Agnes Devanadera, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales

and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita who heads the Cabinet Oversight Committee are determined to keep Ka Bel in jail. They filed a motion for reconsideration based on the ridiculous grounds that the Supreme Court decision has allegedly undermined the Philippine judicial system to favor the "Batasan 6."

The dismissal of rebellion charges against the "Batasan 6" comes in the wake of a campaign for Ka Bel's release. Local and international labor leaders and organizations launched this May the International Forum for Ka Bel's Freedom. Among the primary sponsors were the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, Kilusang Mayo Uno and Free Ka Bel Movement.

Protest actions demanding Ka

Bel's release were launched simultaneously in Hongkong, Japan, Denmark, The Netherlands, London, South Korea, the US, Austria, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. International delegates also demanded a stop to the extrajudicial killings of militants, local candidates and their supporters.

In New Zealand, the Free Ka Bel Movement headed by Dennis Maga launched a protest to condemn political suppression and expose extrajudicial killings a week before Gloria Arroyo's visit to the country. Maga sat in a cage right in front of New Zealand's parliament building, to Arroyo's huge embarrassment before the world.

Arroyo attended the Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue in New Zealand on Mayo 29-31. **AB**

Armed men seize, torture militant pastor

Fascist attacks by the Arroyo regime's minions raged unabated these past two weeks. Most notable of the cases collated by *Ang Bayan* was the abduction and illegal detention of a progressive pastor and mass leader in Laguna.

June 6. Armed men abducted Bayan Muna-South Cotabato chair Gilbert Rey Cardño, 27, at around 11 a.m. in Barangay Crossing Dos, Koronadal City. Cardño is the youngest member of the Bayan Muna National Council.

May 28. Elements of the 730th Combat Wing of the Philippine Air Force abducted Diego Samonteza, member of the local chapter of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and Karapatan at his home in Barangay Bunducan, Nasugbu, Batangas at about 10 p.m. The military nabbed the victim without presenting any warrant of arrest. Despite several eyewitness accounts, the military vehemently denies having Samonteza in custody. Instead, it blamed the incident on

the Calabarzon police. The police pointed back at the AFP as the abductors.

Meanwhile, in Pampanga, two assailants aboard a motorcycle killed Mario Nulud, 47, village chief of San Juan Bautista, Guagua in front of his house at about 9:30 in the morning. Nulud was a campaigner for newly elected Pampanga governor Fr. Ed Panlilio. The brains behind the killing is believed to be jueteng lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda, husband of Lilia Pineda, the losing candidate for governor. Last week, two other village chiefs supporting Panlilio from the towns of Porac and Mabalacat were killed.

May 27. Operatives of the Naval Intelligence Security Forces (NISF) abducted and tortured former



Bayan chair Berlin Guerrero, 44, pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). Berlin was seized in Barangay Malaban, Biñan, Laguna, at about 5:30 in the afternoon. He is now detained in the PNP's Camp Pantaleon Garcia in Imus, Cavite.

Guerrero was arrested without warrant on trumped-up charges of murder and inciting to sedition. He bore marks of physical torture when he was later presented to the media.

Witnesses to his arrest included



his wife Mylene, 40 and their children Julian Mark, 16, Lora Wiggbertte, 15 and Jarius Vines, 13. The family was on its way home from the UCCP's first anniversary commemoration of the killing of Noel Capulong, regional coordinator of Bayan Muna in Southern Tagalog, when they were abducted in front of the Seven Gas Station in Casile Road. They were forced aboard a white L300 van that had no plate number. The NISF released Mylene and the children but detained the pastor. The next day, Guerrero called up Mylene and told her that he was under the custody of the Cavite PNP.

May 21. Armed goons of a Cavite politician killed Dodie Nuñez, photojournalist of *Katapat*, at 9 p.m. while he was on his way home to General Mariano Alvarez. *Katapat* is a local newspaper owned by Archie Gadang, who ran for governor against Ireneo Maliksi in the

recent election. Nuñez was one of those who exposed corruption under Maliksi's administration. Gadang has a pending libel case but is out on bail.

May 20. The Arroyo regime's hatchetmen failed in their attempt to abduct at about 9 a.m. in Las Piñas City Roy Velez, Anakpawis nominee for Congress. The assailants were elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and other military personnel aboard an L300 van with plate number WNM 238 and a Revo van with plate number XDM 541. Three motorcycles each with two operatives served as lookout and backup. The assailants surrounded his house and 20 elements in civilian clothes staked out the area. Velez escaped the dragnet with the help of his friends and neighbors. Velez is also vice president of the KMU National Council.

May 10. Orly Marcellana, sev-

enth nominee of Anakpawis, escaped an assassination attempt by Gloria Arroyo's butchers at about 3:30 p.m. in Barangay Sala, Cabuyao, Laguna. Marcellana and Virgilio Batarlo had just left the Anakpawis office and were on their way to Calamba City when they noticed that their jeep was being trailed by a motorcycle with two hooded riders. When they reached a gasoline station, two other men armed with an M16 rifle arrived. Marcellana quickly leapt from the vehicle and sought refuge in a nearby community.

Marcellana is the secretary general of KASAMA-Timog Katagalugan, the regional peasant organization, and regional coordinator of Anakpawis-Southern Tagalog. He is the widower of former Karapatan-TK secretary general Eden Marcellana who was killed by men of Gen. Jovito Palparan, Jr. in April 2003 in Mindoro Oriental. AB

Violence in Negros

Two peasants were killed and six others seriously wounded last June 4 after they were fired upon by private security guards of Roberto Cuenca, a big landlord and ally of Gloria Arroyo. The victims, all from Hacienda Velez-Malaga, Negros Occidental, were simply asserting their rights as beneficiaries of the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

About 100 peasants belonging to Task Force Mapalad (TFM) occupied a five-hectare parcel of land in Hacienda Velez-Malaga in Barangay Robles, La Castellana that the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) awarded to 57 of the hacienda's tenants through Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA). The land is part of close to 144 hectares that Task Force Mapalad members are claiming out of the 446-hectare hacienda owned by Cuenca, one

of the Marcos dictatorship's chief cronies.

The peasants had just finished clearing three hectares when they were suddenly fired upon with shotguns by three of Cuenca's guards who hid behind some trees. Alejandro Garcesa, 70, and Ely Tupas, 52, both CLOA holders, were killed instantly. Jude Capitanina, 32; Jobert Malayas, 25; Rene Florendia, 27; Alan Hagocoy, 26; Norberto Diamante, 47; and Andre Barcoma, 17 were wounded.

DAR Sec. Nasser Pangandaman awarded to the peasants the right to till the land after the TFM staged a hunger strike in front of the DAR office in Quezon City from February 23 to March 22 this year. Cuenca strongly protested the decision. Along with his friend Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, they used their connections to Malacañang to ensure that the beneficiaries could not actually gain possession of the land. They used as pretext the flimsy excuse that the land could be awarded only after a cadastral survey determines how the property should be parcelled out.

Witnesses said troopers from the PNP Regional Mobile Group merely stood by and watched the shooting. AB



Victorious ambushes in Luzon and Visayas

At least ten enemy troopers were killed and 14 others wounded in NPA tactical offensives in various parts of the country from May 24-31. Five firearms of various caliber were seized in these armed actions.

In Compostela Valley. NPA snipers killed two CAFGU elements last May 31 in Barangay Pasian, Monkayo.

A trooper was killed in an earlier firefight between the 25th IB and an NPA unit under Front 27 in Sitio Mahayag, Barangay Banawe, Mawab at 8:00 in the morning of May 29.

In Aurora. NPA guerrillas ambushed a 40-man unit of the 48th IB "B" Coy at 6:30 p.m. of May 29 in Sitio Igang, Barangay Dimasaet, Dilasag. The enemy unit was aboard a truck on its way back to its headquarters in Barangay Dibacong when attacked with a command-detonated land mine. One trooper was killed and

nine others were wounded, including "B" Coy commander 2Lt. Renente Macario.

In Masbate. An NPA unit under the Jose Rapsing Command seized two M16s and an M14 when they ambushed elements of the 9th IB last May 27 in Barangay Docol, Baleno. Four soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in the three-hour firefight.

National Democratic Front-Bicol

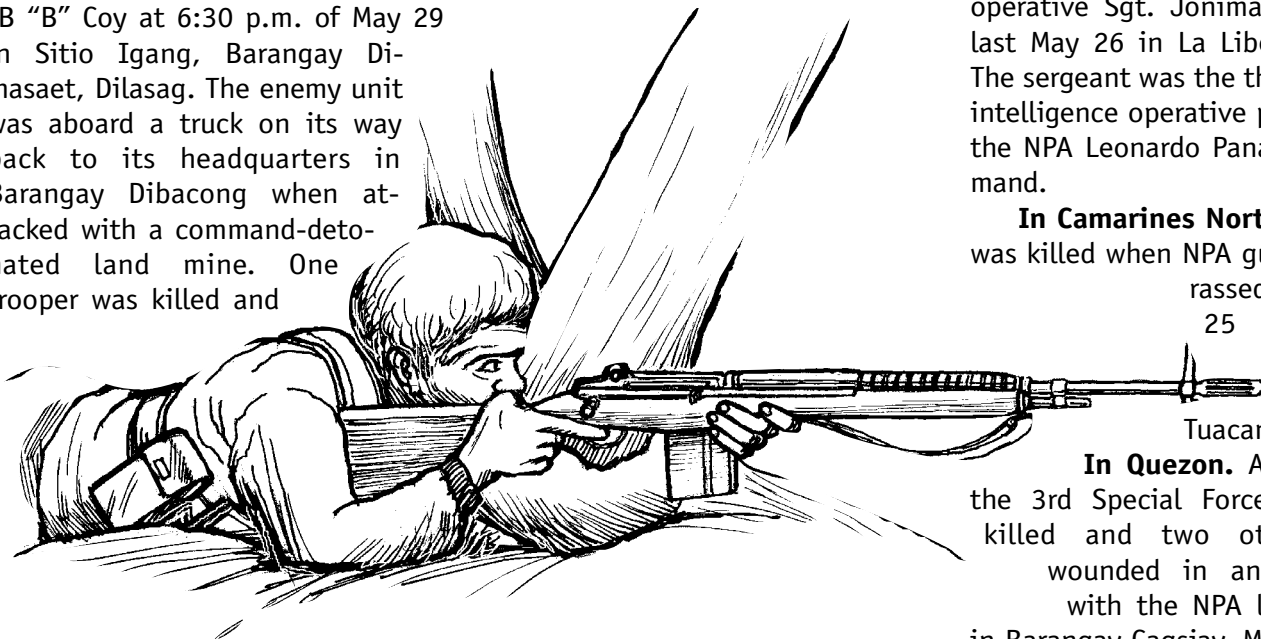
spokesperson Greg Bañares said in a communiqué that three soldiers fell during the first burst of gunfire. The enemy suffered more casualties when their reinforcements were also ambushed.

The soldiers were lured into the ambush by an NPA unit that disarmed last May 26 the lone security guard of a Globe cellsite in Barangay Lahung, Baleno. A .38 revolver and a 12-gauge shotgun was confiscated from the guard.

In Negros Oriental. Red fighters meted revolutionary justice on Philippine Air Force intelligence operative Sgt. Jonimar Emperado last May 26 in La Libertad town. The sergeant was the third military intelligence operative punished by the NPA Leonardo Panaligan Command.

In Camarines Norte. A soldier was killed when NPA guerrillas harassed last May 25 a military camp in Barangay Tuacang, Basud.

In Quezon. A trooper of the 3rd Special Forces Coy was killed and two others were wounded in an encounter with the NPA last May 24 in Barangay Cagsiay, Mauban. **AB**



Not child warriors

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) strongly denied AFP allegations that three youths now in military custody are child warriors. The CPP assailed the AFP for sowing intrigues and lies and using the youths in counter-insurgency and psywar operations.

The AFP insists that the 16-year old boy military elements arrested last June 3 in Barangay Milawid, Panukalan, Quezon is a

child soldier.

Before this, elements of the 19th IB arrested last May 27 a pregnant 16-year old girl from

her home in Barangay Tag-abaca, Leyte, Leyte and accused her of being a child warrior. The military is also claiming that a 17-year old boy who allegedly surrendered to them Leyte, Leyte last May 26 is another child soldier. **AB**

Number of school dropouts on the rise

About 3.4 million children and youth were unable to attend school this year. This is the bitter truth about the Philippine educational system.

According to the Department of Education, the dropout rate last year reached 10.6% for elementary pupils and 15.8% for high school students. Most of those who quit school were enrolled in public schools.

Studies show that for every 100 elementary pupils, only 50 reach high school. Out of these 50 high school students, only 23 reach college. And out of the 23, only 14 graduate.

The number of students dwindles as one goes higher the education ladder. About 20.5 million attend elementary and high school nationwide while only 2.9 million attend college. Only 400,000 graduate from college annually.

School dropouts in the Philippines are an old issue. The dropout rate, however, has risen fast in the last few years. In 2004, up to 73% dropped out from college, most of them from private schools.

The decline in the number of enrollees at the University of the East-Recto is a clear example. About 15,000 students enrolled in this school from the 1990s until the early part of 2000. By 2005, there were only 11,000 students. Now there are only 800 students in its education department. Most of

the students quit school or transferred to other colleges with lower tuition fees.

Even state universities are not exempt from the high dropout rate. There is an annual decline in the number of entrants at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Sta. Mesa. Last year, only 8,000 of the 60,000 who took the entrance examination were admitted into the school. But even those who are admitted have to pay for other fees that are almost higher than the tuition fee.

Over the past few years, there has been a marked trend of students transferring from private to public schools where costs are relatively cheaper. But public schools cannot meet the needs of the annually increasing number of students due to decreasing budget allocations.

There is a glaring lack of schools (14,000 for elementary and 8,000 for high school). Available facilities and resources are not enough to fill in the shortage of 20,587 classrooms, 16,390 teachers and 26,282 principals in public schools.

Meager bud-gets fall below the ₱30.6 million needed for textbooks.

Majority of impoverished families cannot afford the cost of sending their children to public schools despite the relatively lower costs.

The high cost of education—from tuition fees, school supplies, transportation and other daily needs of a student—is the primary factor in almost all cases of dropouts.

To top it all, the reactionary state shows no interest in advancing quality and affordable education at the basic and intermediate levels. It has in fact, been providing progressively smaller education budgets every year.

Moreover, only a small proportion of the budget (₱14 billion) is allotted for state universities and colleges. This number is being further reduced due to the rationalization policy embodied in the Arroyo regime's Long Term Higher Education Development Program (LTHDP). State colleges and universities are thus forced to raise tuition fees or sell off their assets to capitalists.

The University of the Philippines, for instance, raised its fees by a shocking 300% this school opening. Each student now has to pay ₱1,000 per unit, up from ₱300 per unit. More than 80 other state universities have increased

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Splintered and reeking with corruption

Intense infighting among the criminal ringleaders of the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa ng Pilipinas (RPM-P)/Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) has led them to expose each others' criminal and counterrevolutionary activities. This starkly demonstrates how utterly inappropriate the term "revolutionary" is when applied to their ilk.

Nilo de la Cruz (alias Sergio Romero), head of the RPM-P, first announced last May 23 the expulsion of three leaders of the RPM-P for gross malversation of funds, hiring themselves out as a private army for politicians and sowing violence among the peasants of Negros. Expelled were Stephen Paduano (alias Carapali Lualhati, RPA-ABB national commander), Veronica Tabara (alias Inca, RPM-P secretary general and widow of Arturo Tabara) and Ariel Sabandar (alias Suk, head of a tiny group of RPA-ABB in Central Mindanao).

According to De la Cruz, Paduano and his men served as private army for corrupt politicians like David Lacson, mayor-elect of E.B. Magalona, Negros Occidental; and Jocelyn Limkaichong, elected representative for Negros Oriental's 1st district. De la Cruz said Paduano served as an armed goon for politicians and the military in terrorizing the Negrenses. His latest atrocity took place on election eve when he terrorized residents of E.B. Magalona to keep them from voting for Mayor Alfon-

so Gamboa. Paduano also openly campaigned for Limkaichong, a rabid supporter of the military against the revolutionary movement.

De la Cruz accused Veronica Tabara of embezzling P500 million in government funds earmarked for their livelihood program and the P10 million "integration fund" for their return to the fold of the reactionary government. He also accused Sabandar of sowing intrigue among their ranks.

Paduano, Tabara and Sabandar in turn accused

last June 1, 2006, the burning of an ABS-CBN van in 2005 and the killing of Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association president Go Teng Kok. In the first week of June, Paduano's group held their own conference and elected a Fidel Nava as their new leader.

Factionalism among the revisionist traitors is old news. Since their expulsion from the CPP in the early part of the 1990s, these grouplets have continuously fallen apart due to bickering over funds from their criminal and counterrevolutionary activities.

In 1996, De la Cruz's gang broke off from the faction formed by Popoy Lagman and joined the RPA organized by Arturo Tabara. De la Cruz and Lagman parted ways after fighting over the lion's share of the hundreds of millions paid to them by the PEA-Amari in ex-



De la Cruz of leading a band of paid assassins. They linked De la Cruz to the failed assassination of Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez

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their tuition rates.

According to the Department of Education, more than 91 private schools also raised their tuition fees by up to 20% this year.

These include Bicol University, 6-10%; St. Louis University in Baguio, 6%; St. Scholastica's College, 6%; UE Recto, 6-9%; Ateneo

de Davao, 8.2%; Trinity University of Asia, 10%; Mapua Institute of Technology, 3%; Phil. School of Business Administration, 15%; Letran College, 5%; and De La Salle University, 5.3%.

These fee hikes have been implemented despite calls by students and parents to compel schools to refund the illegal fees they have collected. Only a few

schools have complied. Others brazenly raised tuition rates beyond the maximum limits set by law.

The reactionary government actually allows and encourages these schools to impose tuition fee hikes through CHED Memo No. 14, which grants private school owners sole discretion to raise their fees. **AB**

New agreement to step up Australian military intervention in the Philippines

GLORIA Arroyo and Australian Prime Minister John Howard signed last May 31 the RP-Australia Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that would allow Australian troops in the Philippines for counter-terrorism operations. The SOFA can be compared to the Visiting Forces

Agreement (VFA) earlier signed by the US and Philippines.

Meanwhile, as part of continuing US intervention in the Philippines, 2,000 US and Filipino troops launched the Cooperation Afloat Readiness Training (CARAT) in Zamboanga City and Basilan province that are al-

leged Abu Sayyaf lairs. Three US warships and 1,400 US soldiers and Marines trained with three navy patrol boats and 600 Filipino soldiers and Marines from May 31 to June 6. This is the first time CARAT was held outside the former US naval base in Subic Bay.

Rights groups condemn arrest of Dr. Binayak Sen

INDIAN civil rights organizations strongly condemned the arrest last May 14 of Dr. Binayak Sen, secretary general of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) (Chhattisgarh) and vice-president of PUCL (National). Sen was arrested under the repressive Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 2004 and Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2006.

The groups denied accusations that Dr. Sen is a Maoist guerrilla. They said the Chhattisgarh government was angered by

Dr. Sen's documentation of severe human rights violations. Dr. Sen renders free medical services and monitors the health and nutritional status of the people of Chhattisgarh. Working with the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha's Shaheed Hospital, he led the launching of a health program and the construction of a workers' owned and managed hospital that caters to common folk.

He is also a member of the Jan Swasthya Sahyog that implements a cheap and effective community

health program for tribes and rural areas of Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district. Dr. Sen is also active in various health programs serving different areas of Chhattisgarh.

Organizations that condemned Dr. Sen's arrest are the Human Rights Forum, Andhra Pradesh; People's Democratic Forum, Karnataka; People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi; Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee; and Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Kolkata.

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change for their help in evicting urban poor residents from the land being claimed by the company. Tabara and De la Cruz killed Lagman in 2001 for his treachery.

A squabble over funds has emerged anew as the main cause of the latest breakup of the group that De la Cruz had joined.

Leaders of the RPMP/RPA-ABB and a chosen few of their men wallow in luxury, while the men they hire out as mercenaries and bandits live in poverty. Paduano receives a retainer's fee from Maricalum Mining Company and Phillex Gold Mining in Sipalay, Negros

Occidental, as well as the Ylang-Ylang plantation in Ilog, Negros Occidental owned by Danding Cojuangco. When Arturo Tabara was head of the RPM-P, he connived with Paduano and RPA-ABB second commander Daniel Batoy (alias Mokong) to provide a contingent of armed bodyguards for Western Visayas drug lord Boy Cuadra who was then in hiding in Boracay.

These revisionist and antipeople traitors are also behind the violence and killings against leaders and members of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) and peasant organizations allied with the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Task Force Mapalad

in Negros and Panay. They are known lackeys of big landlord compradors like Danding Cojuangco, Roberto Cuenca, Rep. Ignacio Arroyo of Negros Occidental, Gov. George Arnaiz of Negros Oriental and retired general and former PNP intelligence chief Robert Delfin.

The RPMP/RPA-ABB works closely with the military in the killing and abduction of activist leaders of the legal national democratic movement. Their latest crime was the abduction of Luisa Posa-Dominado and Nilo Arado last April 12. They have also treacherously killed more than ten NPA cadres and fighters. **AB**

Bill to fund Iraq war draws flak

ANTIWAR activists assailed President George W. Bush for signing last May 25 a controversial bill that allots \$120 billion for the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan until September 30. They also slammed Democrats in Congress for abandoning their earlier stand tying the budget to a definite schedule for American

troop withdrawals.

Antiwar activists were enraged that 86 Democrats in the House and 37 in the Senate voted for the bill. They said the Democrats must be held accountable for the support they extended to the senseless US war in Iraq. They vowed that they would not hesitate vot-

ing against those representatives if they continue supporting the war in Iraq.

American troops continue to suffer casualties from the four-year US war in Iraq. Up to 3,452 US troops have so far been killed and 34,000 wounded. About three American troopers are killed daily.

Soldiers to be redeployed in Metro Manila

THE AFP will redeploy its troops to Metro Manila now that the election is over. It will be recalled that the AFP and the regime withdrew the troops from urban poor communities after coming under intense criticism from various sectors.

More than 600 troopers are to be deployed in 16 schools in Manila, Quezon City, Malabon, Caloocan and Taguig to allegedly help in the campaign to clean up election lit-

ter. However, as in the past, they will continue surveillance operations against progressive groups and mass organizations.

Kabataan Party launched a protest action last June 4 to condemn the redeployment of soldiers to Metro Manila. It said the deployment is yet another means by which soldiers repress and abuse the common folk and called for an end to the militarization of Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police (PNP) announced the deployment plainclothes rank and file policemen and non-commissioned officers as secret marshals in public places. This is similar to the deployment of Metrocom agents in public places and vehicles during the Marcos dictatorship to spy on so-called subversives and Leftist groups.